

Budget evokes mixed reactions

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The Railway Budget presented to Parliament today has evoked mixed reactions. For, while the common man feels incensed by the increase in Railway fares, the captains of industry have welcomed many of the proposals put forward by Mr. Jaffer Sharief in his speech.

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) has complimented the Railway Minister for presenting a 'positive Budget' and keeping the freight hike within 'reasonable limits'. The organisation, however, feels that even this increase would adversely affect certain sections of the industry already beset with recession.

Mr. N. Sankar, ASSOCHAM President said the Railway Minister should have resorted to non-traditional ways of raising resources such as commercial exploitation of surplus railway land and assigning certain functions to the private sector. He welcomed the extension of computerisation to more centres, increased plan outlay and higher allocation for passenger amenities, the 'own your wagon and container' scheme and privatisation of catering services.

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has reacted positively to the Rail Budget stating that although there was an allround increase in the fares and freights, the Railway Minister had struck a balance in protecting the genuine interests of the rail users and the imperatives of making the railways more responsive to the challenges of modernisation and technological upgradation.

'Little effect on prices': The effect of 7.5 per cent freight increase on prices will be small and will not affect essential commodities, the FICCI President, Dr. V. L. Dutt, said. He commended the Minister for introducing strategies to improve operational efficiency. He said it was a good idea to set up an Expert Committee on Management to suggest ways of making Railways a business.

Reacting sharply to the proposed hike in rail freight and increased passenger fares, the president of the All India Manufacturers' Organisation,

Mr. Vijay Kalantri, said it would have an adverse impact on the trade and industry and a cascading effect on prices all round.

He, however, expressed relief that the Railway Minister had spared essential goods and articles but said the export sector too should have been spared from the proposed freight hike, "to make our products competitive in international market".

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) has welcomed the Railway Budget proposals, particularly introduction of new railway lines, passenger trains, the steps to improve the railway services and encouragement to 'own your container' scheme.

The president, PHDCCI, Mr. R. Singhania, also felt that the increase in freight will have a cascading effect on the present inflationary situation. The proposed reclassification of goods, he feared, may hit the small-scale users. Chair car passengers should not have been equated with AC first class travellers, he said.

Mr. Singhania said the mobilisation of resources could have been done through effective commercialisation of surplus land available to the Railways. He also felt that exports may be affected as it did not figure in the list of essential commodities identified for availing old rate of freight charges.

'Burden on common man: On the other hand, the All India Tyre Dealers Federation (AITDF) said the increase in freight rates would lead to a hike in the rates of commercial road transport, ultimately increasing the burden on the common man.

Yet another organisation, the Indian Institute of Finance (IIF) has termed the Railway Budget as 'pro poor and soft' and "lacking in financial rationality".

The Federation of Indian Export Organisation has termed the Railway Budget as a balanced one in the prevailing circumstances. The vice-president of the organisation, Mr. K. N. Memani, however, expressed his unhappiness over export cargo not being exempted from the hike in freight rate. The Confederation of Indian industry has also welcomed the Railway budget.

However, Opposition parties in Parliament have voiced their displeasure over the Budget. Mr. M. Padmanabham, parliamentary party leader of the Telegu Desam in the Rajya Sabha, felt that the hike in freight prices will push up prices. He felt that the Government instead of resorting to additional taxation of Rs. 1,000 crores should have taken steps to cut wasteful expenditure.

Justice Guman Mal Lodha, MP, has condemned the Budget and called for scrapping increases of all sorts "at least in the second class" category.

'Along predictable line': For the man on the road February is a month to rue his fate. This time around the shock was not as much as they expected. Many of the common people said that the Railway Budget was along predictable lines.

"Even the Government has to raise money where else can they do it but from us," said a government employee. They only hoped that their would be a commensurate raise in the Dearness allowance that is paid to the employees.

"Fares increase is only nominal. But that was only to be expected in a budget that has been dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank," said Mr. U. C. Sharma a vigilance officer at the ESI.

Travellers on the evening shuttle to Palwal called the budget "a Jeb Kat one" (Pickpocket one). "The Railway provides no facility yet at every opportunity they raise the fares," said Mr. Bansal, an officer at the Central Bank of India.

They felt that the Railway budget gave a clear indication of what to expect from the general Budget. "They will clearly tax the rich and the price of Cigarettes, airconditioners, and other luxury items will surely go up," said Mr. Manoj Kumar Bansal.

Regarding where the people will be able to save many laughed and said that being in the fixed income group the chances of saving are nil. "The only thing we can do is cut down on items, which we have done after every Budget for the last few years," complained Mr. Singh, a retired civil servant.

Public schools: The government has no proposal to abolish public schools with a view to provide equal opportunities for education for the rich and the poor.

In a written reply to Mr. Dharam Pal Singh Malik in the Lok Sabha, the Human Resources Development Minister, Mr. Arjun Singh said it would not be appropriate or feasible to abolish any school or group of schools.

Beant Singh's election hailed

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The president of the All India Minorities Front, Mr. S. M. Asif, today welcomed the election of Mr. Beant Singh as the Chief Minister of Punjab and expressed confidence that the new Government would be able to tackle the disruptive forces and establish peace in the State.

He also expressed hope that the State would soon return to normalcy.

In a press note released today, Mr. Asif appealed to the people of Punjab to extend their utmost support and co-operation to the new government for fighting terrorism.

'DESU not told to rationalise tariff structure'

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

Despite the Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking (DESU) facing a revenue deficit mainly due to unremunerative tariff, the government has not directed it to rationalise its tariff structure, the Rajya Sabha was told today.

This was stated by the Minister of State for Power, Mr. Kalpanath Rai, in a written reply to Mr. M. C. Bhandare and Syed Sibtey Razi.

SC/ST panel's terms for implementing new economic policy

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) Welfare Committee has in a resolution urged the Government to give due weightage, to the reservation policy while implementing the new economic policy.

In the wake of the Government's move towards privatisation and the corresponding possible retrenchment of employees, the committee demanded that the Government pass a law in the current session of Parliament making provisions for the reservation of jobs and other facilities for SC/ST in the private sector.

The committee also requested the Government not to introduce cuts in the allocation of funds to welfare projects meant for the SC's and ST's and appealed for an increase in the allocation.

Traders were sore over the fact that despite March 31 being the last day for filing I.T. returns, the department had raided the shops. Shopkeepers said the I.T. personnel had come a few days back to conduct a "general survey".

Most of the 3,000 shops in the market were still closed when this reporter visited the spot at around lunch time. "Now that it is past lunch time there is no scope of the shops opening for the rest of the day," Mr. Sharma said.

The I.T. officials on the scene refused to say anything more than "we are just searching the premises".

According to the secretary of the Traders Association, the three shops that were raided belonged to Larsen Electrical Stores.



Police keep curious onlookers away during tax raids at Bhagirath Palace in Delhi on Tuesday.

Property dealer gunned down

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

Sukhbir, a property dealer of Gokulpuri, was allegedly shot dead and four others injured when some unidentified men opened fire at them at Loni border between Delhi and U.P. early this morning. Sukhbir, reported to be a member of the Santo gang, operating in the Capital, was wanted in the murder case of the constable of Ghaziabad police last year.

Those injured include a suspended head constable of the Delhi Police, Hukam Singh Yadav. The others have been identified as Ramesh, Karambir and driver Rajpal. While one of them was discharged after being administered first aid, three were admitted for treatment of bullet injuries.

According to the police, the fifth person in the car managed to escape unhurt. The assailants escaped in their Maruti car (DL 2CA 0652) and were seen moving towards Uttar Pradesh. The shoot-out is suspected to be the fallout of a scuffle between Sukhbir with the members of another property dealer of Gokulpuri about ten days ago.

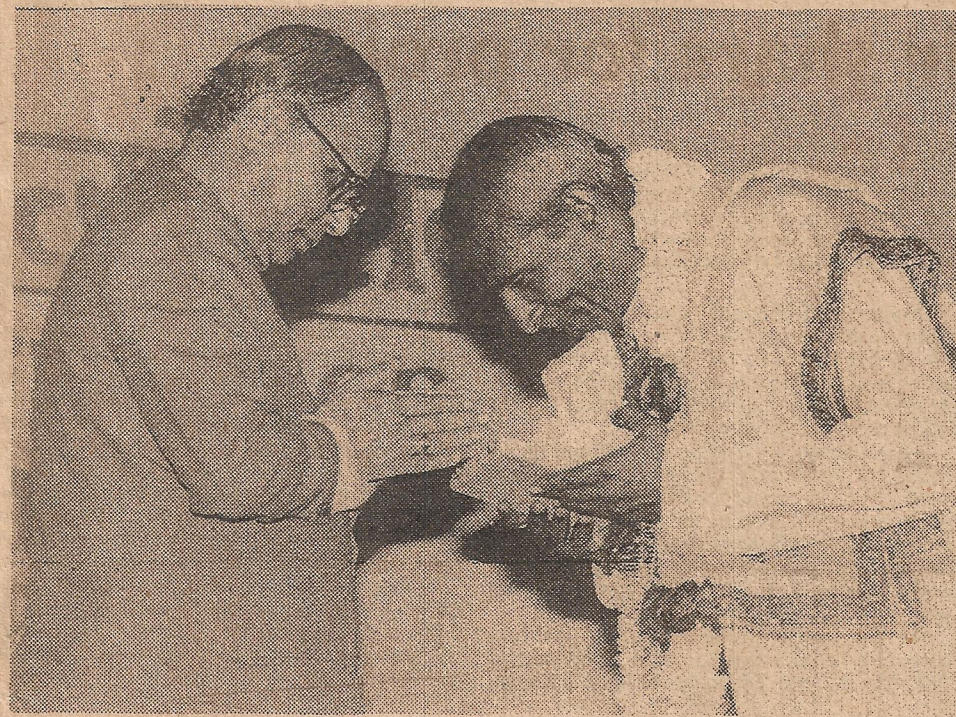
The incident took place at around 9 a.m. today when the victims coming towards Delhi to attend a wedding, were intercepted by the Maruti car near Loni border in the North-East Delhi. As the assailants opened fire, the victims abandoned the car that came under the volley of bullets and tried to escape in different directions.

However, the assailants fired at Sukhbir and shot him dead. While bullets pierced Sukhbir on his chest, the others received injuries on their legs. There were three bullet marks on the car used by the victims and one of the windows was completely shattered.

According to Hukam Singh Yadav, who is recovering at Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, the assailants had aimed only at Sukhbir and managed to eliminate him.

Sukhbir was a resident of Jassigarhi village in Kherakhand town of U.P.

The Delhi Police and the U. P. police have launched a massive hunt for the assailants though officials of both the forces were uncertain regarding the jurisdiction of the crime since the shoot-out had taken place in the border.



The Sahitya Akademi president, Mr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, presenting the Akademi Award for Maithili to Dr. Ramdeo Jha in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Sahitya Akademi awards presented

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

It might be hard to believe but is nevertheless true. Mr. K. Rajanarayanan, who never studied beyond eighth standard, is one of the winners of the Sahitya Akademi Award for 1991. He receives the award for his Tamil book, *Gopallapurathu Makka*.

The book, the second part of the anthology, is a portrait of a life in a Tamil village as it changes from early days of the British empire to the beginning of Indian independence.

Mr. Rajanarayanan besides having written several books has compiled a dictionary of colloquial dialects of the region following which he was nominated as a visiting professor in the Folklore Department of the University of Pondicherry. Though he himself was not able to receive any formal academic education, scores of students were completing P.Hd. and M.Phil. under his guidance.

"I began writing at the age of 40 and never looked back, the 70-year old award-winner said. He is the recipient of several other awards for his outstanding contribution to vernacular literature.

"I feel good. Rather excellent. Anybody would," said Mr. Ajit Barua, another recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award said. A retired I.A.S. officer from Assam, Mr. Barua's book, *Brahmaputra Iyadi Padya*, a collection of poetry, receives the Sahitya Akademi award.

Mr. Barua, has written only two books and both have won prizes. The first, *Kichaman Padya Aru Gaan*, was written in 1982.

Mr. Rajanarayanan and Mr. Barua are two of the 22 people who received the Sahitya Akademi Awards for 1991 at a function here today. Of these, 10 are poets, 4 novelists, 3 short story writers, 3 play writers and 2 critics. The awards are given to the people for their outstanding contribution to the regional literature.

The awards were presented by Kartar Singh

Plea for airport in Cannanore

NEW DELHI Feb. 25.

The Cannanore Airport Committee has suggested setting up of an air port in Cannanore with a view to boost tourism in North Kerala as well as to help the Naval Academy project undertaken at Ezhimala, near Cannanore.

In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, the committee stated that Cannanore was one of the oldest military centres in the country and it had strategic importance from the point of view of defence.

Call for social boycott of Hit

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The president of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara Committee, Mr. Terlok Singh, today accused Mr. Avtar Singh Hit, president Akali Dal (Badal) of being a renegade. He called upon the Sikh Community for a social boycott of Mr. Hit.

According to a press release, Mr. Terlok Singh alleged that despite being issued a show cause notice for his meeting with the Minister of State for Parliamentary and Home Affairs, Mr. M. M. Jacob, in which he discussed his participation in the Punjab Poll, Mr. Hit has not stopped his anti-party activities.

Duggal, a well known Punjabi writer and the winner of the Padma Bhushan and Sahitya Akademi award.

Presiding over the function, Mr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, the president of the Akademi described said writing required sincerity and honesty and a feeling of search for truth.

The recipients are Ajit Barua (Assamese), Moti Nandy (Bengali), Mohan Singh (Dogri), I. Allan Sealy (English), Labhshankar Thaker (Gujarati), Girija Kumar Mathur (Hindi), Chandrasekhar Kambur (Kannada), Gulam nabi Tak Naazir (Kashmiri), Meena Kakodhar (Konkani), Ramdeo Jha (Maithili), M. P. Sankunni Nair (Malayalam), Yumlembam Ibombha Singh (Manipuri), Bhalchandra Nemade (Marathi), Girmee Sherpa (Nepali), Jagannath Prasad Das (Oriya), Harinder Singh Mehboob (Punjabi), Premji Prem (Rajasthani), Rew Prasad Dwivedi (Sanskrit), Harikant Jethwani (Sinhali), K. Rajanarayanan (Tamil), Bhamidipati Ramagopalam (Telugu), Salahuddin Pervaz (Urdu).

New telephone exchange in Lodi Road

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The Mahanagar Telephone Nigam, Delhi, would commission a 4,000-line capacity digital remote line exchange unit (RLU) in the Lodi Road area tomorrow.

With the commissioning of the new exchange, all the numbers of Lodi Road '36' PRX exchange would be transferred to the new digital exchange with the code '436'. All numbers would remain unchanged except that digit '4' would have to be prefixed to the old number.

Mr. B. M. Khanna, chief general manager MTNL, through a press release informed that all affected customers have already been intimated individually about their new numbers. However, anyone dialling the old number would get a recorded message about the number change.

The important buildings affected by this changeover include CGO complex, Scope Complex, Parvayaran Bhavan, Sochna Bhavan, Oberoi Hotel, Lodhi Hotel and Golf Club.

IT raids: traders down shutters at Bhagirath Palace

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The usually bustling Bhagirath Palace, a wholesale market of electrical and medical goods, wore a deserted look as traders downed their shutters following an Income Tax (I.T.) raid on the shops of one of traders there.

According to the traders there, they had done this out of fear. The I.T. people came to raid one shop and harass anyone who they can catch.

The secretary of the Electrical Traders Association, Mr. Ajay Sharma, said the raids had started as early as 7 a.m. "Some 30 police personnel and about 20 men from the I.T. department swooped on the place at that early hour even though the market did not open till much later."

Post-production centre opened

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The Post Production Centre (PPC) of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was inaugurated by the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee here on Monday. Mr. S. Kobayashi, Japanese Ambassador to India, presided over the inauguration.

The PPC is an organ of the Communication Division of IGNOU which would work to enhance the quality of softwares produced for multi-media instructional packages of the university. It is equipped with a wide range of modern audio visual facilities received from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) under a grant-in-aid scheme worth Rs. 72 crores.

Mr. Mukherjee said that human resource development would be one of the main thrust areas of the Eight Five-Year Plan. This would require eradication of adult illiteracy and universalisation of elementary education.

Expressing concern over the decline in academic standards, Mr. Mukherjee said open universities could help check this trend by providing alternative channels and reaching the not so privileged sections of society. Electronic communication was an integral component of this system and its development would be in the best interests of the country, he added.

Mr. Kobayashi, congratulating IGNOU on the commencement of the PPC, expressed hope that the cooperation between JICA and IGNOU would strengthen in the future.

The Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU, Prof. V. C. Kulandaiswamy and Prof. H. P. Dikshit, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, also spoke. — Our Staff Reporter

Call to end embargo against Iraq

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

A seminar on "the effects of the imposed embargo upon Iraqi people and reconstruction in Iraq after the Gulf war" was held in the Capital. Speakers said despite the heavy Allied bombing the "people of Iraq with their will power were able to reconstruct 90 per cent of the damage."

They speakers wanted the Indian people, Government and the Parliament to send a clear message to the United Nations that the "embargo must end."

Many of the speakers felt that the attack on Iraq was a greater conspiracy of the United States. "President Bush was fighting a personal grudge against the President of Iraq, Mr. Saddam Hussien," said Mr. R. K. Kaushik.

Among the speakers were Mr. Jash of the Indian Council of World Affairs, Mr. Bhim Singh of Panthers Party and Mr. Mohammed Afzal, MP.

Ten years RI for possessing heroin

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The Additional Sessions Judge, Mr. S. L. Khanna, today sentenced Mohammed Taqi to ten years rigorous imprisonment for possessing 500 grams of heroin.

The Judge also imposed on the accused a fine of Rs. 1 lakh and ruled that in default the accused would undergo additional rigorous imprisonment for one year.

Mohd. Taqi was arrested by the Defence Colony police in 1987. The police recovered 500 gram of heroin from him.

Be self-employed, youth told

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

Dr. S. Z. Qasim, member, Planning Commission, has urged youth to look for avenues of self-employment, instead of looking for jobs.

Inaugurating a two-day national conference on entrepreneurship, development and awareness, here, he said most of the big entrepreneurs of today had initially started on a small-scale basis.

He said there is a lot of scope for setting up small enterprises in servicing electronic equipment like computers, television, videos and the like.

Mr. N. Vittal, Secretary, Department of Electronics, Government of India, also stressed on the need for youth to take up self-employment. Repair services, he said, provided vast opportunities for self-employment.

The conference was being organised by the Delhi Institute of Technology which is under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. It aims at helping the participants acquaint themselves with aspects of entrepreneurship, to understand various stages involved in enterprise launching and management.

The conference also aims at apprising participants with the methods of identification of products, project feasibility and preparation of project reports. — Our Staff Reporter

Worker stabbed to death

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

Ram Sagar Sahai, a factory worker was allegedly stabbed to death by his colleague in Gandhi Nagar following a quarrel. One of the accused, Ramesh, was arrested while his accomplice Munna is absconding.

Body found: Body of a woman, aged around 25 years, was found on a deserted plot between GTB Hospital and Mental hospital Shahdara yesterday. The body bore strangulation marks.

A case of murder was registered and further enquiries were on.

Major overhaul in Bihar administration likely

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

The Delhi Administration was expected to carry out a major overhaul in the jail administration at Bihar Jail. This followed the report submitted by a three-member Committee which probed the attempted jail break following discovery of a 116 ft-long-tunnel dug up by the detainees.

The overhaul operation became inevitable in the wake of the attempted jail break on January 28 but was put off to await the findings of the Committee.

Now that the Committee had submitted its report, the Delhi Administration was now analysing and examining the probe Committee report and would initiate measures to implement various recommendations made in the report apart from further steps to tighten security inside and around the jail.

Although action was initiated promptly against Assistant Superintendents and some lower rank officials by the officiating Inspector General (Prisons), Mr. Arun Mathur, the heads were going to roll soon for the probe Committee did indict the top officials of the jail, who were found wanting in effective discharge of their duties.

No action was initiated against the senior officials by Mr. Arun Mathur, on account of their status as Class I officers and their controlling powers vested with the senior officials of the Administration. It was reliably learnt that they may be shifted or reverted back if on deputation.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mathur had already ordered mass reshuffle of assistant jail superintendents.

Rally seeks implementation of Tikku Panel report

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25.

Service doctors in the capital took out a rally down the Rajpath today to draw the attention of the members of Parliament to their demand for implementation of the Tikku Committee report.

A spokesman of the Joint Action Council of Service Doctor Organisations (JACSDO) said the doctors had withdrawn their indefinite strike within 17 days last year after they were assured by the MPs that all pending issues would be resolved soon.

In a memorandum addressed to the Parliamentarians, JACSDO said a minority of the service doctors who were in senior positions had resisted the improvements proposed in the Tikku report. This was exploited by the bureaucracy to

misguide the Health Minister, JACSDO alleged in the memorandum.

On December last, the Health Ministry had announced the promotion of 1,103 service doctors "as a part of the new promotion policy." But according to JACSDO, it was only the backlog of March 1990. The promotions took place only in the Central Health Services and other constituents of the Service Doctors Organisation like the ESIC, Railways and New Delhi Municipal Corporation had been left out.

The memorandum further said in the past three months the Health Minister had given innumerable schedules for a final solution and assured that the matter would be resolved by March 10 this year. The service appealed to the members of Parliament to intervene and ensure that the matters were resolved by March 10.